

THE HERITAGE OF THE  
30th SPACE WING  
AND  
VANDENBERG  
AIR FORCE BASE

~~AFSC~~  
MICROFILMED BY ISAM

AFSPCOM  
1 Jan - 31 Dec  
1995  
K496.04

## Chronology

### 1941

5 Oct: United States Army activated Camp Cooke, California. Used during World War II as an armored and infantry training site.

### 1946

1 Feb: Camp Cooke placed on an inactive status.

### 1950

7 Aug: Camp Cooke reactivated and used during the Korean War as an armored and infantry training site.

### 1953

1 Feb: Camp Cooke again inactivated.

### 1956

16 Nov: The Secretary of Defense directed the United States Army to transfer 64,000 acres of Camp Cooke's 86,000 acres to the Air Force.

### 1957

Jan: The Air Force obtained a use permit for its new facility at Camp Cooke (formally transferred by the Army effective 21 June 1957).

15 Feb: The 6591st Support Squadron (Air Force) organized at Camp Cooke and assigned to Air Research and Development Command.

15 Apr: Air Research and Development Command (later Air Force Systems Command) activated HQ, 1st Missile Division at Los Angeles, California, and HQ 392nd Air Base Group at Camp Cooke. At the same time it inactivated the 6591st Support Squadron at Cooke.

23 Apr: Vandenberg AFB established by Air Research and Development Command (ARDC) on the north 64,047 acres (approximately 100 square miles) of what was then known as Camp Cooke.

See 4 Oct 1958

1957 (Continued)

9 May: Start of new construction and major rehabilitation at Camp Cooke.

7 Jun: The Air Force portion of Camp Cooke redesignated Cooke Air Force Base.

1 Jul: Air Research and Development Command activated the 704th Strategic Missile Wing (Atlas) at Cooke AFB.

16 Jul: Headquarters 1st Missile Division relocated from Los Angeles to Cooke AFB.

1 Aug: 1st Missile Division assumed operational control of the 704th Strategic Missile Wing.

7 Dec: The Secretary of Defense directed the transfer of South Camp Cooke (almost 20,000 acres) from the Army to the Navy for use in a projected national missile range on the West Coast.

1958

1 Jan: Cooke AFB (with major operational and training units) transferred from Air Research and Development Command to Strategic Air Command. Launch facility construction as well as research and development activities at Cooke AFB were the responsibility of the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division (with headquarters at Inglewood, California).

14 Feb: 19,861 acres of South Camp Cooke transferred from the Army to the Navy on interim permit basis (actual transfer on 27 May).

5 Mar: The Joint Navy-Air Force (Burke-White) Agreement was completed. This agreement defined the areas of responsibility between the projected Pacific Missile Range and Cooke Air Force Base.

4 Apr: Establishment of the U.S. Naval Missile Facility at Point Arguello, the southern portion of former Camp Cooke (facility formally commissioned on 10 May).

16 Jun: Formal establishment of the Navy's Pacific Missile Range (with its headquarters at Point Mugu and its major launch head at Point Arguello).

### 1958 (Continued)

31 Jul: A memorandum of agreement establishing a Field Office at Cooke AFB by Air Force Ballistic Missile Division (ARDC) was signed with the 1st Missile Division. The office would: 1) oversee the construction of missile facilities and 2) flight test launch vehicles, many of which would be turned over to the Strategic Air Command for operational deployment.

4 Oct: Cooke AFB redesignated Vandenberg AFB, honoring the late General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force's second Chief of Staff.

16 Dec: First missile launch from Vandenberg AFB – a Thor intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM). The mission was a success.

### 1959

28 Feb: World's first polar orbiting satellite (*Discoverer I*) launched from first Thor/Agena booster/upper stage combination from Vandenberg AFB.

9 Sep: First West Coast launch of an Atlas (12D). Afterwards, General Thomas S. Power, Commander in Chief of Strategic Air Command, declared the Atlas system to be operational.

### 1960

1 Jul: Major expansion of Pacific Missile Range with acquisition of Eniwetok and Kwajalein Atolls in the Marshall Islands by the United States Navy for instrumentation complexes (in support of Air Force launches from Vandenberg AFB).

10 Aug: A Thor/Agena A launched from Vandenberg AFB placed *Discoverer XIII* into orbit. On 11 August, the data capsule was ejected and recovered by Pacific Missile Range ship *Longview*. This marked the first successful recovery of a man-made object ejected from an orbiting satellite.

11 Oct: Initial West Coast launch of an Atlas/Agena space booster.

20 Oct: Air Force Ballistic Missile Division Field Office at Vandenberg AFB replaced by the 6565th Test Wing (Ballistic Missiles and Space Systems).

1960 (Continued)

1 Dec: 6565th Test Wing (Ballistic Missiles and Space Systems) redesignated 6565th Test Wing (Development).

1961

1 Apr: 6565th Test Wing (Development) assigned to Space Systems Division (redesignated Space and Missile Systems Organization on 1 July 1967) in Los Angeles, California.

3 May: The nation's first silo launch of a Titan I at Vandenberg AFB.

21 Jul: 1st Missile Division (SAC) at Vandenberg redesignated 1st Strategic Aerospace Division.

4 Oct: Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson visited Vandenberg AFB for an orientation and tour of the base.

1 Nov: 6565th Test Wing (Development) redesignated 6595th Aerospace Test Wing.

1962

23 Mar: President John F. Kennedy visited Vandenberg AFB to witness the launch of Atlas 134D.

26 Apr: First West Coast launch of a Scout space booster.

18 Jun: Last launch of a Thor IRBM from Vandenberg. (First launch and first missile fired from Vandenberg AFB on 16 December 1958.)

26 Jun: First launch of an Army Nike-Zeus from Kwajalein against an Atlas from Vandenberg AFB.

1 Aug: First launch of an Atlas F ICBM from Vandenberg AFB.

28 Sep: Initial launch of a Minuteman I from Vandenberg AFB.

28 Sep: First international satellite launched from Vandenberg (Canada's Alouette) aboard a Thor/Agena booster.

## 1963

16 Feb: First West Coast launch of a Titan II ICBM from an underground silo.

28 Feb: First use of a Thrust-Augmented-Thor/Agena space booster at Vandenberg.

28 Sep: Initial launch of Thor/Able-Star from Vandenberg AFB.

4 Nov: First launch in the Advanced Ballistic Reentry System (ABRES) program at Vandenberg AFB. Vehicle used for this mission was an Atlas D.

16 Nov: To improve management and operation of DoD Ranges and Flight Test Facilities, the Secretary of Defense directed several changes including establishment within the Air Force of a central authority to coordinate planning of ICBM and space vehicle launching and tracking, and transfer to the Air Force major portions of the Navy's Pacific Missile Range, including its facility at Point Arguello, California.

3 Dec: Air Staff decision that the Strategic Air Command would continue as host organization over the combined Point Arguello/Vandenberg AFB (effective 1 July 1964) with Air Force Systems Command responsible for all matters pertaining to management and operation of range support facilities and services.

## 1964

2 Jan: Headquarters Air Force Systems Command established a Headquarters National Range Division (Provisional) at Patrick AFB, Florida, and an Air Force Space Test Center (Provisional) at Vandenberg AFB.

25 Jan: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's ECHO II passive communications satellite, placed in a near-polar orbit by a Thor/Agena B launched from Vandenberg AFB, included among its tests one-way transmissions from England to Russia. First cooperative space program between Russia and the United States.

15 May: Headquarters National Range Division formally organized. Activation of HQ NRD at Andrews AFB, Maryland, with detachments at Patrick AFB and Los Angeles AFB. Activation of Air Force Western Test Range at Vandenberg AFB (replacing the provisional Space Test Center). Redesignation of HQ Air Force Missile Test Center at Patrick AFB as HQ Air Force Eastern Test Range. HQ NRD to coordinate launch and

## 1964 (Continued)

range activities at the Eastern and Western Test Ranges.

1 Jul: Point Arguello (nearly 20,000 acres) transferred from the Navy to the Air Force and annexed to Vandenberg AFB.

## 1965

18 Jan: Initial West Coast launch of a Thor/Altair.

1 Feb: Five months ahead of the original schedule, Air Force Western Test Range (AFWTR) assumed responsibilities for intercontinental ballistic missile and space vehicle support functions from the Navy's Pacific Missile Range. Transferred to the Air Force were fixed and mobile instrumentation sites at Point Arguello (south of Vandenberg AFB), Pillar Point (near San Francisco), South Point and Kokee Park (Hawaii), Midway and Wake Islands, Canton Island, Eniwetok Atoll (including Bikini Atoll) in the Marshall Islands, and six range instrumentation ships (*Huntsville*, *Longview*, *Range Tracker*, *Richfield*, *Sunnyvale*, and *Watertown*).

5 Mar: Last launch of a Titan I from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 3 May 1961).

3 Apr: The Atomic Energy Commission's SNAPSHOT spacecraft carrying SNAP-10A nuclear reactor successfully launched from Vandenberg AFB by an Atlas/Agena. The on-board reactor provided electrical power for a 2.2-lb ion engine, marking the first attempt to test a reactor-ion system in orbit.

1 Jun: Transfer of Kokee Park (Hawaii) Tracking Station management from AFWTR to NASA.

13 Aug: Last launch of Thor/Able-Star from Vandenberg AFB. (first launch on 28 September 1963).

18 Aug: First launch of a Minuteman II from Vandenberg AFB.

25 Aug: DoD revealed that newly-authorized Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) program (announced by President Lyndon Johnson the same day) would be launched from both the Air Force Eastern and Western Test Ranges.

## 1965 (Continued)

28 Nov: Last Thor/Agena launch from Vandenberg AFB (first mission on 28 February 1959).

## 1966

1 Mar: Air Force acquired Sudden Ranch adjacent to South Vandenberg, adding approximately 14,890 acres to the base and increasing its size to its present 98,400 acres.

12 Mar: Start of construction (site preparation) for Space Launch Complex 6 facilities at former Sudden Ranch property.

30 Mar: Final mission of the Thor/Altair from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 18 January 1965).

29 Jun: Nation's initial launch of a satellite by a Titan IIIB/Agena space booster (first launch of a Titan III from Vandenberg AFB).

9 Aug: Initial launch of a Long Tank Thor/Agena D (Thorad/Agena D) space booster.

25 Aug: AFWTR supported the Navy's first launch of a Bomarc A target missile from Vandenberg AFB.

15 Sep: First launch of a Thor/Burner II from Vandenberg AFB.

2 Oct: First Thor/Delta launch at Vandenberg AFB.

21 Dec: Initial launch of Atlas/Prime.

29 Dec: Liftoff of a Thrust-Augmented-Thor/Agena D space booster combination marked the 123rd major launch operation from Vandenberg AFB since January. This annual launch record remains unbroken 30 years later.

## 1967

11 Jan: First and only launch of a Castor/Scramjet from Vandenberg AFB.

21 Feb: Vice President Hubert Humphrey, accompanied by his wife and a small party of officials, viewed a Minuteman I ripple launch from Vandenberg.

### 1967 (Continued)

17 Mar: AFWTR assumed operational control of the Range Instrumentation Ship, *Vanguard*.

19 Apr: Last of three successful Atlas/Prime missions from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 21 December 1966).

7 Nov: Final launch of an Atlas D missile (first operational at Vandenberg on 9 September 1959).

### 1968

17 Jan: Final launch of a Thrust-Augmented-Thor/Agena space booster from Vandenberg (first launch on 28 February 1963).

16 Aug: First of two Atlas/Burner II space launches from Vandenberg AFB.

### 1969

11 Apr: First Minuteman III flight test missile launched from Vandenberg AFB.

10 Jun: Department of Defense announced cancellation of the planned Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) program from Space Launch Complex 6 at Vandenberg AFB.

1 Oct: Eniwetok Atoll (Marshall Islands) placed on a caretaker status.

21 Nov: Bikini Atoll (Marshall Islands) turned over to U.N. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

### 1970

1 Apr: Headquarters Space and Missile Test Center (SAMTEC) activated at Vandenberg AFB with assignment to Air Force Systems Command's Space and Missile Systems Organization (SAMSO) in Los Angeles. HQ Air Force Western Test Range (AFWTR) inactivated (personnel reassigned to SAMTEC). The 6595th Aerospace Test Wing reassigned from SAMSO to SAMTEC. The 6555th Aerospace Test Wing (Patrick AFB, Florida) redesignated 6555th Aerospace Test Group and reassigned from SAMSO to 6595th Aerospace Test Wing. Title of

**1970** (Continued)

Western Test Range retained for national missile range in the Pacific.

1 May: Organization of 6595th space and missile test groups with assignment to the 6595th Aerospace Test Wing.

**1971**

8 Jun: Final launch of the Thor/Burner II from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 15 September 1966).

15 Jun: Initial launch of a Titan IIID space booster from Vandenberg AFB.

14 Oct: The first of eight Thor/Burner IIA launches from Vandenberg AFB.

**1972**

1 Feb: Headquarters National Range Division at Andrews AFB formally discontinued.

25 May: Last launch of a Thorad/Agena from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 9 August 1966).

2 Oct: Last of two Atlas/Burner II space launches from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 16 August 1968).

**1974**

12 Oct: Final use of an Atlas booster in the Advanced Ballistic Reentry System (ABRES) program.

**1975**

1 Jan: The USNS *Sunnyvale*, the last Air Force Western Test Range instrumentation ship, transferred to the Maritime Administration.

23 May: First use of the Minuteman I booster, replacing the Atlas, for the ABRES program.

## 1976

8 Feb: Final launch of a Thor/Burner IIA from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 14 October 1971).

27 Jun: Last launch of a Titan II ICBM (first West Coast launch on 16 February 1963).

11 Sep: Initial launch of a Thor/Block 5D-1 from the West Coast.

## 1977

29 Dec: South Vandenberg AFB brush fire consumed 9,040 acres and claimed the lives of the base commander, both fire chiefs, and a civilian bulldozer operator.

## 1978

26 Jun: Final launch of an Atlas/Agena booster/upper stage combination from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 11 October 1960).

## 1979

Jan: Demolition and construction work began at Space Launch Complex 6 in preparation for the Space Shuttle program.

1 Oct: Space and Missile Test Center (SAMTEC) redesignated Space and Missile Test Organization (SAMTO). At the same time the Eastern Space and Missile Center (ESMC) and the Western Space and Missile Center (WSMC) were created and assigned to SAMTO. SAMTO and WSMC collocated at Vandenberg AFB.

## 1980

14 Jul: Fifth and final launch of a Thor/Block 5D-1 from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 11 September 1976).

### 1981

23 Jun: Final launch of an Atlas F booster from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 1 August 1962).

### 1982

14 Jul: Last two launches of the Navy's Bomarc target missile from Vandenberg AFB (first Bomarc launch on 25 August 1966).

17 Nov: Final launch of a Titan IIID from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 15 June 1971).

### 1983

9 Feb: Initial launch of an Atlas H space booster.

17 Jun: First Peacekeeper missile launch.

20 Jun: First of seven Titan 34D launches from the West Coast.

6-8 Nov: Space Shuttle orbiter *Discovery* at Vandenberg AFB for a series of fit checks at the orbiter lifting frame.

### 1984

16 Nov: The Space Shuttle orbiter *Enterprise* arrived at Vandenberg AFB for a series of facility verification tests.

### 1985

23 Aug: First Peacekeeper ICBM "cold launch" from an underground silo (LF-08). First eight launches conducted from an above ground launch stand at Test Pad 01.

15 Oct: Space Launch Complex 6, site of future Space Shuttle operations, declared operational. However, much additional work and testing required.

22 Oct: First launch of Ground Launch Cruise Missile from Vandenberg AFB.

## 1987

11 Feb: Last launch of the Titan IIIB/Agena (first launch on 29 July 1966).

15 May: Last Atlas H launch (first launch on 9 February 1983).

9 Nov: Last launch of a Minuteman II (first launch from Vandenberg AFB on 18 August 1965).

## 1988

13 May: Air Force Secretary Edward C. Aldridge, Jr., directed the Air Force to begin mothballing the Space Shuttle program at Vandenberg AFB.

5 Sep: First Titan II standard launch vehicle (SLV), a refurbished and modified Titan II ICBM, launched from Vandenberg AFB.

6 Nov: Final Titan 34D launch from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 20 June 1983).

## 1989

11 May: Initial launch of the Small ICBM.

20 Sep: Space Launch Complex 6 placed on mothball status.

1 Oct: Inactivation of HQ SAMTO at Vandenberg AFB.

5 Oct: First attempt by a commercial firm, American Rocket Company (AMROC), to launch its SET-1/SMLV (Single Engine Test - 1/Single Module Launch Vehicle) failed on the pad at Vandenberg AFB.

## 1990

Aug: Troops from the 30th Space Wing began deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Desert Shield.

5 Aug: First flight of the air-launched Pegasus space booster employing a B-52 carrier aircraft over the Western Range.

6 Jun: Completion of Peacekeeper Rail Garrison system facilities at

## 1990 (Continued)

Vandenberg AFB.

1 Oct: WSMC and ESMC realigned from Air Force Systems Command to Air Force Space Command. Simultaneously, 9th Space Division activated at Patrick AFB, Florida, to coordinate activities of both organizations. Also, 2nd Space Launch Squadron activated at Vandenberg and assigned to WSMC. 2nd SLS was formerly the Atlas Division of the 6595th Aerospace Test Group.

## 1991

15 Jan: Host base responsibilities for Vandenberg AFB transferred from Strategic Air Command to Air Force Space Command. Additionally, the 4392nd Aerospace Support Wing, the 392nd Communications Group, and the base hospital were reassigned to WSMC the new host organization.

8 Mar: First West Coast launch of a Titan IV space booster.

18 Apr: Second and final launch of the Small ICBM missile (first launch on 11 May 1989).

23-24 Jul: Vice President Danforth Quayle visited Vandenberg AFB.

30 Sep: 9th Space Division inactivated at Patrick AFB.

19 Nov: WSMC and ESMC redesignated 30th Space Wing and 45th Space Wing, respectively. Simultaneously, the word "Test" was removed from the geographic designation, "Western Test Range."

## 1992

20 Jul: In keeping with the objective wing structure of "one base one boss", the ambiguous titles of "installation commander" and "base commander" were reexamined. The latter term was abandoned in favor of installation commander who was dual-hatted as the operational wing commander.

### 1993

1 Jul: HQ AFSPC activated HQ Fourteenth Air Force and assigned the unit to Vandenberg AFB. At the same time, Air Combat Command's 310th Training and Test Wing at Vandenberg reassigned to the 30th Space Wing.

### 1994

4 Feb: Initial demonstration flight of the Astrid (Advanced Single Stage Rapid Insertion) interceptor vehicle.

13 Mar: First launch of the Taurus space booster.

14 Apr: Formally the Titan Division of the 6595th Aerospace Test Group and more recently Detachment 9, Space and Missile Systems Center, Titan Division, the unit was transferred to the 30th Space Wing and activated as the 4th Space Launch Squadron.

8 May: Final launch of the Scout booster from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 26 April 1962).

### 1995

24 Mar: Final launch of an Atlas E booster from Vandenberg AFB (first launch on 7 June 1961).

15 Aug: First launch from Space Launch Complex 6 involved the Lockheed Launch Vehicle 1 (LLV-1), carrying the commercial satellite *GEMSTAR*.

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